



# ***News Release***

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **DES AWARDS MARRIAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS CONTRACTS**

(PHOENIX, August 29, 2001) - The Department of Economic Security (DES) has announced the awarding of contracts in the amount of \$785,600 to eleven organizations that will conduct Marriage and Communication Skills workshops in eleven counties. These workshops are designed to promote communication and relationship skills for couples who are planning to marry or couples who are already married.

Last year, legislation established a nine-member Marriage and Communication Skills Commission. The Commission, working with DES staff, developed the key elements for a Marriage and Communication Skills program and recommended funding for organizations that will provide the communication and relationship skills workshops.

The Marriage and Communication Skills program is funded with federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds. The federal block grant allows states the option to use funds on programs that encourage the maintenance and formation of two-parent families. Jodi Beckley, Governor Jane D. Hull's Policy Advisor for Human Services and Commission member said, "I know policy makers will be anxious to examine the results of this novel approach to welfare reform in the future. For right now, it is my hope that the program will help participants strengthen their relationships and provide more stable homes for their children."

Couples will be expected to pay a small percentage of the hourly rate. Parents with minor children may be eligible for a voucher issued by DES that would cover the full cost of the course if the family meets 150 percent of the federal poverty level. The Commission is also developing a Marriage Handbook that will be distributed free of charge to marriage license applicants starting this fall.

According to Rep. Mark Anderson, Co-Chair of the Marriage and Communication Skills Commission, "This is a significant development whose goal is to lower the divorce rate, save taxpayer's money and change the culture of divorce to a culture of healthy marriage."

For more information call the DES Public Information Office at (602) 542-4296. Couples interested in learning about the organizations that have received funding for the Marriage and Communication Skills program can contact Ben Levine at (602) 542-2106.